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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE LAMORE; PASS TO NSC ADAM
STERLING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: HUNGARY'S QUIET DIPLOMACY ON SOUTH OSSETIA AND
ABKHAZIA INDEPENDENCE

REF: A. SECSTATE 90978
[B.](#) SECSTATE 90980
[C.](#) BUDAPEST 0837

Classified By: DCM Jeffrey Levine; reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. The Hungarian Government will continue to work through their NATO and EU fora rather than directly confront the "difficult partner" Russia on the Georgia conflict. Prime Minister Gyurcsany will attend the EU's September 1 special meeting on Georgia, looking to draw a red-line based on President Sarkozy's negotiations to "manage the Russia-NATO/EU relationship with unity and determination, even though Russia would like to see a "new Cold War-like international environment." In a sign of solidarity with the Georgian people, the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Advisor told the Ambassador on August 26 that they will accelerate the inauguration of their new Embassy in Georgia by several months, with the Foreign Minister leading the delegation. In addition, the MFA has released an official statement (para 7) expressing dismay in response to the Russian Duma's vote on South Ossetia and Abkhazia. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) Discussing ref A with PolOff on August 25, MFA Russian and Balkans Deputy Department Head Istvan Ijgyarto began by confirming that both houses of the Russian Duma called for recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence in votes on August 25. Queried as to whether Hungary would consider approaching Russia directly on the independence issue, Ijgyarto reiterated the oft-stated Hungarian position of the importance of working within the EU and NATO to be sure there is a consistent, single message, rather than various capitals making separate statements that are not on message. Ijgyarto stated that the Hungarians fully support President Sarkozy's negotiating efforts with Russia and Georgia as outlined in ref B.

[¶3.](#) (C) Acknowledging the perception that Hungary appears to some to be "hesitant" in its response to the Georgia crisis, Ijgyarto commented that "now is the time to remain sober on relations with Russia...we don't want to hit them in the head," emphasizing that "Russia is a difficult partner - we know from past experience." Stating his belief that "Russia would like to see a new Cold War-like environment where everything was predictable," Igyarto emphasized the importance of managing the Russia-NATO/EU relationship with unity and determination. Asked if the Russian Embassy in Budapest had been in contact with the MFA concerning the Georgia issue, Ijgyarto replied that they have only approached the MFA in an attempt to counter the Georgian's public "misinformation campaign."

[¶4.](#) (C) Ijgyarto confirmed that Prime Minister Gyurcsany will attend the special EU meeting called by President Sarkozy on

September 1. Ijgyarto outlined three Hungarian goals for the conference: maintain NATO/EU unity on the issue; send a "determined" message to Russia; and draw the following "red line" - withdraw the troops, re-establish the pre-August 7 positions; and respect the internationally recognized territorial boundaries and sovereignty. He stated his own view that Russia would not make a quick decision on the independence question for the two break-away Georgian regions, stating it is in Russia's interest to maintain leverage on the current Georgian government leadership. Ijgyarto commented that while Georgia wanted to flex its muscles and send a message to Moscow on behalf of all the countries in the Caucasus, Saaskavili failed to fully understand the consequences of his actions. Touching on the Nabucco pipeline question, Ijgyarto said he believes Russia was "surgical" during its military operations in Georgia, limiting damage to the current gas line infrastructure in order to avoid opening up a "new front," specifically mentioning the Azeris.

¶ 15. (C) Senior State Secretary Marta Feksi told the DCM on August 26 that the MFA will accelerate the opening of its Embassy in Tbilisi as a sign of solidarity with the Georgian people. Instead of opening in early 2009 as planned, the Embassy will now be inaugurated in October and include a high level visit. "It's important for us to be there," Feksi said, "as tangible evidence of our commitment to Georgia." Feksi also said their previously selected Ambassador will likely be replaced with a diplomat more experienced in crisis management.

¶ 16. (C) In a meeting with Ambassador Foley on August 26, the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Advisor, Karoly Banai,

confirmed that Foreign Minister Goncz will open the Hungarian Embassy in Tblisi. Banai stated that, in the short term, while looking for a permanent location, the MFA is currently in discussion with the Bulgarians on use of their facility in Tblisi, with the view toward potential joint diplomatic engagement in the near term. He also noted that the Foreign Minister Goncz has invited the Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister, enroute to a conference at Lake Bled, Slovenia, to meet with her on Saturday, August 29 to discuss the Hungarian position on the current situation in Georgia. Banai anticipates a joint press statement following the meeting.

¶ 17. (U) The following is the official MFA statement on the Russian call for recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence:

BEGINNING OF STATEMENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary was dismayed to receive news that the State Duma of Russia has proposed today, in a request addressed to the national assemblies of member states of the United Nations and other international parliamentary bodies, that South Ossetia and Abkhazia be recognized as "individual, independent and sovereign" states.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes such a move would not serve to reinforce stability in the Caucasus, and would not further the peaceful resolution of the present conflict that has already taken an exceptionally heavy toll both in terms of human life and financially. This unilateral move for recognition by the Parliament of Russia - which during the conflict has called itself an independent, outside peacekeeping party - cannot serve as a legal basis for the resolution of the conflict. Neither its content nor its spirit is in keeping with the agreement that has been put forth by the President of the European Union and the President of the Russian Federation and which enjoys broad support from the international community.

As a member state of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Republic of Hungary is firmly committed to the peaceful resolution, through negotiations, of this conflict, and believes this is

possible; Georgia's territorial integrity and the respect of its internationally recognized borders must serve as a basis for this.

END OF STATEMENT

¶8. (C) Comment. While not surprising, the Hungarian diplomatic approach to the Georgian conflict remains muted. Prime Minister Gyurcsany continues his public silence on the issue; opposition politicians Viktor Orban and MP Matyas Eorsi have been much more vocal publicly (ref C), leaving President Solyom as the lone Hungarian Government official to make passing comments during a recent 40th anniversary remembrance of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The August 26 MFA statement responding to Russia's call for South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence is, however, a welcome addition to their activities on the issue. Additionally, Banai's meeting with the Ambassador also provided an encouraging sign that the Hungarians are actively seeking further steps to underscore their commitment in support of NATO/EU and U.S. measures in response to the Georgia conflict.

Foley